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WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, June 25, 1894.

It seems highly probable that Government will construct the Nicaragua Canal. Favorable action is expected in the House on the bill which a sub-committee of the Committee on Commerce has prepared as a substitute for all other bills, and it is not unlikely that this "administration" may pose in history as the proud sponsor for one of the great undertakings of the century. It will not be impossible to pass this bill through both houses of Congress at this session, unless it gets entangled with financial heresies.

Already the question of making payment in new bonds, or issuing new greenbacks, or by the coinage of seigniorage in the treasury, is being discussed by the contending money factions. At all events, the bill is making good headway. It has been decided by the Committee that the work of construction should be under the supervision of three engineer officers of the army, and as many others detailed to assist them as the necessities of the case may require. It has also been decided (so it is said) that while the canal can be built for a sum not exceeding \$70,000,000, there should be an issue of stock amounting to \$83,000,000, of which amount the Government will retain \$70,000,000. Seven and a half million will be given to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, and five and a half million to the Maritime

Canal Company in payment for their concessions, and in lieu of all the stock issued by them up to the time the work was suspended. The people of the country care very little whether the sum expended is 10 or 20 millions more or less so that the work is commenced and pushed speedily to successful completion.

Capt. George P. Scriven, U. S. A., recently made a report to Congress on the Nicaragua Canal in its military aspects. He tells concisely and clearly the story of the attempts of nations and individuals to solve the problem of water transit across the isthmus of America from early days down to the time when the serious efforts of the United States began. "Perhaps it is not too much to say," he writes, "that the later efforts upon which nearly all our present knowledge is based, owe their inception and development to the endeavors of Admiral Daniel Ammen." He studied the isthmus with growing interest in the problem of transit itself, and finally arrived at certain conclusions which he set forth in an able paper read in 1860 before the American Geographical Society. The commercial value of the waterway he says is at least shared by the world; but the value, so far as it relates to home defence, concerns only the nations of the western continent; and of these virtually the United States alone as the one Power which has or is likely to have ships that can use it. There can be no excuse for a failure on the part of this Government to realize the great military value of the canal to the defence of the coasts of the United States, for a canal under our control will give all the advantage to the defence that is to be derived from manœuvring on inside lines; and will, in ad-

dition, give the probability of naval stations, and the certainty of coaling stations on the road of ships from the Pacific to the Atlantic seaboard.

Appended to Capt. Scriven's report is a chapter on the climatic conditions of Nicaragua, with special reference to military operations on land, by Gen. Greely.

NOTES ON INLAND WATER ROUTES.—The course of the torpedo boat *Cushing* in her inland water passage from Washington to Newport included the Potomac River, Chesapeake Bay, the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, Delaware Bay, upper Delaware River, Delaware and Raritan Canal, Raritan River and Bay to New York, etc. The distance covered was 349 miles. The running time between Washington and Brooklyn, nearly 32 hours. Lieut. Fletcher, in command, says no difficulty need be expected in passing vessels of the *Cushing* class through these canals, either day or night. Under favorable conditions a speed of six miles may be maintained.

In this connection it may be noted that a year ago the United States Senate instructed its Committee on Commerce to inquire into the expediency of constructing an interior coast line of water ways across the head of the peninsula of Florida, along the coast from Florida to Hampton Roads, between the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware Bay, etc.

Mr. Robert Gamble, of Tallahassee, recently submitted to Congress an exposition of the advantages and value of a barge canal connecting the waters of the Mississippi River through the State of Florida with the waters of the Atlantic seaboard. He detailed a route,

the total length of which is 550 miles; starting at a point below New Orleans and passing through the northern part of the peninsula of Florida.

There is also a revival of the oft-talked-of plan of building a ship canal between Philadelphia and New York. A committee of the Philadelphia City Council has recommended an expenditure of \$10,000 for a preliminary survey of a route.

Commander Menocal recently gave the House Committee on Commerce, which is considering the Nicaragua Canal plan, some interesting details of the manner in which the Panama Canal project was made to appear feasible to the French people. As stated in a local paper: "President Hayes appointed Mr. Menocal United States delegate to the French convention which considered the plans of joining the Atlantic and Pacific. The American delegate found that M. De Lesseps had a concession from Panama, while the French agent had failed to secure a concession from Nicaragua. Every energy, he said, was therefore bent toward showing that the Panama route was the better one. A committee of French engineers was appointed, but, after considering the two routes, reported against Panama. Not daunted by this the contest was carried before the full convention, where De Lesseps' friends and employés in the Suez Canal predominated. Many of the delegates left the meeting, and with the membership much reduced, M. De Lesseps managed to push through the plan by which the Panama Canal route was preferred to that of Nicaragua. Commander Menocal stated that when this action was taken the Panama route had not even been surveyed, and its practicability had not been

estimated or established. With the Panama project approved by the French convention, De Lesseps started the gathering of money by lottery and otherwise, which finally culminated in the collapse of the Panama Canal scheme."

According to the same authority, Mr. Menocal also stated that England had never joined France in attention toward the Isthmus canal. A short time ago, the engineers who built the great Manchester Canal designated several of their members to go to Nicaragua and investigate that canal project. They spent several weeks there, and then examined the plans and estimates of the American engineers. They made a report that the canal could be built inside the American estimate of sixty-five millions, and that the plan was practicable.

THE GREAT LAKES.—Commander Sigsbee, the head of that most practical and useful appendage of the government service—the Hydrographic Office—desires to connect its service with the nautical practice of the Great Lakes in the same manner which has obtained for many years between that Office and the mariners of the oceans of the world. In pursuance of this object he will place within the reach of the mariners of the Lakes much useful nautical information that cannot be profitably collected and published by private individuals.

The Pilot Chart of the Great Lakes, recently issued for the first time, is one of the most valuable and attractive publications of the Hydrographic Office. It contains the sailing routes from Cape Vincent at the northwestern extremity of Lake Ontario (one of the terminals of the New York Central and Hudson River

Railroad), through Lakes Ontario, Erie, Michigan, Huron and Superior, and in addition the railroad routes and connections on all the lake shores. Also the positions of lights and weather bureau stations; a table showing length, number and dimensions of locks of canals connecting with the Great Lakes, and a chart of canals on the St. Lawrence between Ogdensburg and Montreal.

The Charts, Sailing Directions, Notices to Mariners, Pilot Charts and Hydrographic Bulletins of this office have been of great value to mariners on the oceans all over the world. They have enabled navigators to shorten their passages, avoid dangers to navigation, to handle their vessels with greater facility and avail themselves of favoring conditions. Much loss of life and property has been avoided by means of the information thus furnished, and now it is proposed to give the mariners of the Great Lakes the benefit of similar charts and publications concerning these lakes. Its purpose will not include weather forecasts, because that branch is now covered by the Weather Bureau, but suggestions and instructions to lake mariners in seamanship and navigation. The loss of life and of vessels on these inland waters is vastly greater in proportion than on the ocean. The lack of good seamanship and knowledge of modern methods of navigation is largely responsible for the lamentable losses in the severe lake storms of October 14th, 1893, and May 18th, 1894.

The Notices to Mariners of the Great Lakes (also a new publication) contains monthly notes of changes in buoyages, lights and fog signals; the positions of

sunken vessels and other dangerous obstructions ; errors in charts, and changes in pilot regulations.

A branch of the U. S. Hydrographic Office has been established at Chicago, where the public may obtain all the latest information upon all subjects relating to the navigation of the lakes. There is prospect of favorable legislation by Congress for the establishment of a similar branch at Cleveland, Ohio.

The Hydrographic Office has in an advanced stage of preparation a book of Sailing Directions for the Great Lakes and a book of Azimuth Tables, from which the sun's true bearings may be found at any time for convenience in navigation.

Some of the publications of this Office are circulated without charge, but in the nature of an exchange, it being presumed that mariners will co-operate with the Office in collecting information for the general benefit. For other publications the Office is required by law to make a charge, which, however, amounts to only the cost of printing and paper, the cost of the surveys and of the various drafting and engraving processes and the work of compilation not being included. In general, Notices to Mariners and Hydrographic Bulletins are circulated without charge. Pilot Charts are given without charge to those who co-operate actively with the Office in securing information which is embraced upon the chart. For Hydrographic Charts and for Sailing Directions and special book publications the Office makes a small charge. For special information in answer to inquiries no charge is made.

Prof. Harrington, of the Weather Service, has published a series of charts intended to demonstrate the

existence and course of currents in the Great Lakes, as shown by the movements of bottle papers during the seasons of 1892 and 1893.

By combining a large number of observations he concludes that the currents in the Great Lakes can be grouped under four heads, viz.: body currents, surface currents, due to prevailing winds, the return currents, and surf motion. As to body currents: These lakes all have an outflow, and there must be a general motion of the water towards this outflow. The speed of this current would be very slight. As to surface currents due to prevailing winds, he demonstrates from records that the prevailing direction of winds on the lakes is from west to east. As to return currents: The drive of the water from one end of the lake to the other necessitates more or less a return current, providing the outlet is not sufficiently large to allow this water to pass through. In the Great Lakes the outlets are relatively small. As to surf motion: While a body is outside of the surf it is carried in by the general drift of the water. As soon as it comes within the surf it advances more or less rapidly in the direction in which the surf is moving. It is found that the speed of Great Lake currents varies from 4 to 12 miles a day. In a few special cases, especially with short paths, very much higher velocities have been found. It appears probable that while the most distinct or primary currents have good persistency in direction, they do not have very much constancy in velocity, while the secondary currents may fluctuate greatly in velocity and some in direction.

Examination of the bottle tracks on the charts shows

a general direction from west to east, with return currents in some cases. In Lake Superior and Lake Erie the currents favor the south shores, in Lake Michigan the east shore, in Lake Huron the west shore, while in Lake Ontario it is more general, with slight tendency for the south shore. Prof. Harrington remarks, however, that the currents which appear in the charts are the currents of the season of navigation and practically the currents of summer. It is entirely possible that the currents of the other seasons would show some variations of these.

GEOGRAPHIC DICTIONARIES.—Following the completion of the topographic survey of three of the New England States,—Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island,—Mr. Gannett has prepared a series of geographic dictionaries, designed to aid in finding any feature or name upon the atlas sheets of each of those States as published by the United States Geological Survey. These dictionaries contain all the names given upon the sheets, and are limited to them. Therefore they cannot be looked upon as complete, or even approximately complete, gazetteers, because the topographic sheets, from necessity, contain comparatively few names, but a large proportion of the names given would not likely appear in any local or general gazetteer. A brief statement of locality and some characteristic feature follows each name; for instance:—Lion Head; hill in northwestern part of Salisbury (Conn.), elevation 1,760 feet: Roger Island; off southern coast of Branford, in Long Island Sound: Salmon Brook; rising in northwestern part of Granby, tributary to

Farmington River. A few prefatory pages describe the geographic features and boundaries of each State.

Mr. Gannett has also completed his summary account of the development reached in methods of topographic surveying, and especially in the methods of the U. S. Geological Survey.* He says "the work is not intended as an elementary treatise upon surveying, nor a general treatise on topographic work, although it may, to a certain extent, supply the existing need of such a work."

His description of topographic surveys, and the methods employed by the United States Government, by State governments, and by railroad corporations, is interesting and somewhat surprising as exhibiting how little has yet been accomplished. Briefly stated: the Clarence King Survey of the 40th Parallel (1867-1872) embraces a zone of country 105 miles in breadth, comprising an area of 87,000 square miles. The Hayden Survey (1873-1878) covers an area of 100,000 square miles in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming and Idaho. The Powell Survey of the Rocky Mountain regions (1869-1877) embraces an area of about 60,000 square miles, covering parts of Wyoming, Utah and Arizona. The Northern Transcontinental Survey by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company (1882-1883) mapped 43,000 square miles in Montana, Idaho and Washington. The Coast Survey has covered the greater part of the Atlantic, Gulf and Pacific coasts with triangulation, and with a narrow strip of topographic work—altogether about 40,000 square miles. It has also distributed a large amount of geodetic work over the country. The United States Lake Sur-

* Manual of Topographic Methods.

vey has mapped the shores of the Great Lakes. The Engineer Corps, U. S. A., has completed a number of small pieces of topographic work in different parts of the country. The surveys of the General Land Office have extended over an area of about a million and a half square miles, the quality of the work greatly improving since its inception. Triangulation and topographic work by the States has been confined chiefly to Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The scales which have finally been adopted for the publication of the map of the United States are 1:62500, or very nearly one mile to an inch, and 1:125000, or very nearly two miles to an inch. When this work was commenced, in 1882, three different scales were used for different parts of the country, depending upon the degree of complexity of the topography, etc. The third scale was 1:250000. The scales adopted are believed to be sufficiently large to represent with faithfulness all the details required to picture the country and show the proper relations of its features, and to make the map of the greatest possible service for industrial and scientific uses, such as the selection upon it of general routes for railroads, and other public work, and to show the location of boundary lines in such a way that their position may be recognized upon the ground. Mr. Gannett estimates that a map of the entire United States, even excluding Alaska, upon these scales, will cost in the neighborhood of \$20,000,000, and at the present rate of progress require fifty years for its completion. The experience of the nations of Europe, all of which have prepared topographic maps of more or

less of their areas, while certain of them have mapped their entire areas several times, has been of great service in shaping the conclusions of the Survey, and points unmistakably in the direction of the adopted scales.

The various sections of our topographic maps as fast as produced have found extended use in all sorts of industrial enterprises with which the surface of the ground is concerned, and have already become well nigh indispensable in the projection of railroads, water works, drainage works, systems of irrigation and other similar industrial enterprises.

THE METEOROLOGICAL CONGRESS OF 1893.—Among the series of conventions held in Chicago during the term of the Columbian Exposition was the International Meteorological Congress. Prof. Harrington, of the Weather Bureau, was invited to organize the Congress, and he called in conference Prof. Cleveland Abbe, F. H. Bigelow, Thomas Russell, Charles A. Schott, Commander Richardson Clover, U. S. N., and Mr. O. L. Fassig. As the result of the conference an organization was effected and a programme arranged. The papers submitted were strictly of a scientific character, and presented in the best manner the present state of our knowledge in the particular branch of the science under consideration. The United States were, of course, generously represented. There were delegates or contributions from Vienna, London, Calcutta, Hamburg, Paris, Smolensk, Baden, Cairo, Rio de Janeiro, Manila, Helsingfors, Berlin and Canada.

There were twenty-six papers read under several

subdivisions of meteorological science, but of special geographical interest are "The four great rivers of Siberia," by Dr. Franz Otto Sperk, of Smolensk, Russia; "Regimen of the Rhine region," by M. von Tein, of Baden; "The Nile," by W. Willcocks, of Cairo.

Concerning the Nile region Mr. Willcocks said: "The recent explorations of Lugard and Baumann have completed the work originated by Burton and carried on by Speke, Grant, Baker, Stanley, Gordon, Junker and Schweinfurth, and we can now follow the course of the Nile from its springs, far south of the equator, to its termination, north of the 30th parallel of latitude. A river so regular and so gentle in its movements as the Egyptian Nile can only be understood after a study of its sources of supply." He then details quite fully the hydrology of the Nile valley, and in conclusion says: "It would be a triumph indeed and a real compensation if the resources of modern science could be employed to utilize these great lakes (the Victoria, Albert and Tsana), and by the construction of suitable works, to secure a constant and plentiful supply of water to the Nile valley during the summer months when water is scarce and valuable as gold. The day these works are carried out at the sources of the Nile, the lakes will take their proper place in the economy of the water supply, and we shall be able to say of them in their entirety, as we can say of them to-day in their degree, that what the snows of the Alps are to the Po, Lakes Victoria, Nyanza and Tsana are to the Nile, and what the Italian lakes are to the plains of Lombardy, Lake Albert is to the land of Egypt."

Dr. Sperk's sketch of the physical conditions of the rivers of Siberia is based on material collected and on his personal observations and recollections from an eighteen years' residence in Siberia.

M. von Tein's paper describes graphically the general physical characteristics of the Rhine region.

PACIFIC PILOT CHART—DERELICTS, ETC.—The Pilot Chart of the North Pacific Ocean for July contains many of the features which have made the Atlantic Chart such a favorite. It outlines sailing courses from Port Townsend to Japan; from San Francisco to Japan, China, Australia, the Hawaiian Islands; the limits of the trade winds and fogs; storm tracks; the positions of derelicts, and illustrations (with explanation) of the benefits that may be derived from a knowledge of "great circle" sailing. The predictions or forecasts of weather conditions for July seem to be omitted, probably on account of the limited number of observations in unfrequented portions of the ocean.

The Congressional action favorable to the perpetuation of this new service seems assured. But just now the Hydrographic Office finds itself crippled by the head of the Navy Department in withdrawing several valuable experts for duties in other branches of the service. This action has placed the Office at such a disadvantage that it will be impossible with the available force to produce the charts with any degree of regularity.

The Hydrographic Office has for eleven years taken cognizance of matters pertaining to ocean wrecks and derelicts, and has gathered a very large amount of informa-

tion, some of which has from time to time been given out in Pilot Charts and Bulletins. In order to meet the increasing inquiries from correspondents and the press concerning these menaces to navigation, as well as to stimulate public sentiment in favor of vigorous and prompt efforts by the Governments interested in removing these dangerous obstacles, as recommended by the International Marine Conference in 1889, and by the Congress of the United States in 1893, Commander Sigsbee has brought together, in a neat 4to volume,* the statistical information of his office on the subject. There were reported 1,628 derelicts in seven years, an average of nineteen every month. The majority of them were vessels which were abandoned near the United States coast. The average drift is about thirty days, although the notable three-masted schooner *Fannie E. Wolston* has been a derelict for 850 days, and she is supposed to be afloat yet; 316 of the derelicts were reported floating bottom up. There have been forty-five collisions with derelicts, nine of which resulted in sinking the vessel, but in this count no reckoning is made of vessels reported missing and never heard from,—like the *Naronic*.

The Hydrographic Office wants Congress to authorize the building of a vessel of about 800 tons, expressly for blowing up, or otherwise destroying, or bringing derelicts into port.

HISTORICAL PAPERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.—
No bureau of the Government furnishes so much for a small outlay as the Bureau of Rolls and Library of

* Hydrographic Office Publication No. 107.

the Department of State. Appeals to Congress for more generous recognition have resulted year after year in flat refusal, sometimes with derision at the idea that the Government should spend money in restoring or repairing old papers, or in printing valuable historical records that are practically inaccessible.

Nevertheless, by the application of the most inexpensive methods and by slow stages considerable progress has been made during the past six years in arranging, inlaying, mounting and binding manuscripts, and yet so great is the field, the inroad is scarcely perceptible. Few people have any idea of the enormous wealth of historical material in this Department. Every now and then some writer nibbles off a few crumbs, and in several instances there have been compilations of the writings of Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Hamilton, but in neither case with anything approaching entirety, or with the scrupulousness that should be observed in such undertakings.

There is probably not a paper in the Department two hundred years old, and yet many of them are already so worn from frequent handling, that with increasing demands they will be worthless before the end of another century. The Government has wisely preserved the records of the War of the Rebellion, by the aid of the printing press; but the records of the Continental Congress, or of the War of the Revolution, or of the War of 1812, are still slumbering in this and other Departments of the Government. The present enthusiasm among the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution, the Society of Colonial Dames, etc., will probably aid in creating a public sentiment to bear

upon Congress in favor of more enlightened liberality in dealing with the restoration, preservation and printing of all the official records of our country.

Mr. Allen, chief of this bureau, by the limited issue of Bulletins of modest and inexpensive pretensions, is very largely aiding the growth of this sentiment. He has already given us indexes of some miscellaneous papers, also a calendar of the correspondence of President Monroe, and we are promised a similar publication as to the Madison papers. Occasionally he gives us a print of some original document, as the proceedings of the Annapolis Convention in 1786, and of the Federal Convention in 1787; the latter, an *exact* print of Secretary Jackson's journal of the Convention which formed the Constitution of the United States, and now first printed, one hundred and eight years after date.

THE DISPERSION OF WASHINGTON'S LETTERS AND LIBRARY.—For a most interesting account of the letters, papers and library of General Washington, one should read Dr. Toner's communication to the American Historical Association in 1892, recently printed as part of its annual report.

Dr. Toner has devoted his life to the making of a perfect literary portraiture of Washington as he was, from his own records. He has for many years labored most persistently to secure a perfect copy of every scrap of paper written by Washington, whether "in print" or not; and this from no mercenary motive, but to preserve in the "Toner Library" of the Library of Congress, for the free and unrestricted use of the

present and all future generations. The collection already has over 5,000 letters of Washington *never yet printed*. It has literal copies of all the volumes known to be in existence of the diary of Washington, from 1760 to the close of his life. Selections from these diaries have been printed covering particular periods, but never in a consecutive form which made any pretension to completeness.

At the death of Washington, all his papers were left intact and in excellent order. His nephew, Bushrod Washington, who inherited these priceless memorials, "lamentably failed to appreciate in any magnanimous sense his duty to his uncle's memory, or the value to history of these precious literary treasures." When Jared Sparks began a systematic examination of the papers (about 30 years after the General's death), the collection had suffered considerable spoliation.

Some of the volumes of Washington's diary had been given to personal friends, as memorials and keepsakes. A prominent clergyman had been permitted to take original letters provided he would leave "fair copies" in their stead. The number of letters so taken is stated to have been 1,500. "Tradition credits Bushrod Washington with the exercise of a most gracious hospitality to visitors, and as having repeatedly invited distinguished persons, while viewing the sage's library and papers, to help themselves to specimens of General Washington's handwriting, as well as to letters from distinguished persons to him."

Bushrod Washington bequeathed the papers and letter books to his nephew, George C. Washington, and the books to his nephew, John A. Washington. At a

later date the United States purchased the papers bequeathed to George C. Washington. The books bequeathed to John A. Washington, or a part of them, were sold in 1849 to the late W. F. Poole. They were sold again to the late Henry Stevens, who at one time designed placing them in the British Museum, but some gentlemen of Boston secured the collection and presented it to the Boston Athenæum. The balance of the books bequeathed to John A. Washington were scattered at public auction in Philadelphia in 1876.

The letters written by General Washington are very numerous and scattered all over the country. They are found in the archives of all of the original States and in the possession of numerous individuals and institutions. Among the latter the Lenox Library, New York Historical Society, Long Island Historical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the New Hampshire, Maine and Virginia Historical Societies are prominent. The collections in the Massachusetts Historical Society and in various public institutions in Massachusetts make that State perhaps the most extensive owner of these autographic treasures. The letters now in private hands will sooner or later lodge in public institutions.

In searching up the history of General Washington and his city in reference to the late celebration of the centennial of laying the corner-stone of the Capitol, the researches of Dr. Toner proved to be of surpassing value. So, too, on the occasion of the dedication of the National Washington Monument in 1885, Dr. Toner was able to furnish the names and addresses of 430 of the kith and kin of Washington, to whom invi-

tations were sent, scattered through 30 States of the Union. The same list was made available in 1889 on the occasion of the observance in New York of the Centennial of the Inauguration of the first President of the United States.

Twelve years ago Dr. Toner presented to the United States, for preservation in the Library of Congress, his private library containing about 25,000 books, pamphlets and manuscripts, chiefly general and local American histories, publications relating to our climate and diseases, biographies of medical men (printed and in manuscript), works on the history of medicine in America from the settlement of the country to the end of the first half century of our national existence, the early literature of small-pox, yellow fever, cholera and other epidemics, general and local; a special collection of early contributions to the literature of medicine in America and early American imprints scarcely second to any in the country. Also a *mine* of historical and biographical notes, the work of a lifetime, and mostly in manuscript. Dr. Toner is still adding liberally to the collection, and will probably make suitable provision for its future increase and maintenance.

This is the first instance in the history of this Government of the free gift of a large and valuable library to the nation, and the suggestion is not without force that an example so laudable may be productive of many similar literary and scientific benefactions. Many local libraries have been greatly enriched by similar endowments, notably the Boston Public, Harvard, Cornell, Chicago University, Lenox, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the University of Pennsylvania, etc.

NOTES.—The National Geographic Society recently celebrated the occasion of its 100th meeting. Addresses were made by a number of prominent men, and the history of the Society reviewed to date. Altogether it was quite a "praise meeting," with considerable ground for an overflow of good feeling. The president of the Society told how from an organization of 209 members it had grown to 960. Gen. Greely compared the work of other great geographic societies of the world with our own. The president of the American Geographical Society regretted by letter his inability to be present.

At the 99th meeting of the Society (May 18) Prof. R. T. Hill read a paper on the "Geography of Cuba," in which he said that after having spent several weeks in the study of the coral reefs of Cuba he had been unable to find evidence of any connection geographically between the island and the United States.

By the liberality of Congress the proceedings, papers, etc., of the fifth meeting of the International Geological Congress (*Congrès Géologique International*), which was held in Washington in 1891, have been printed in a sumptuous volume. It contains a history of the Congress, addresses, communications and discussions, and a geological description of the excursion to the Rocky Mountains. The latter constitutes fully one-half of the volume, and is in fact a guide book written by scientists, among whom are G. K. Gilbert, S. F. Emmons, Arnold Hague, J. P. Iddings, A. C. Peale, C. D. Wolcott, W. J. McGee and Whitman Cross. It is a valuable geographical and geological description of the region traversed.

The first report of the International Commission of Geologic Bibliography will soon be published in Paris.

Six parties from the Coast Survey are now engaged in *completing* the preliminary survey of the southeastern boundary line of Alaska. The parties, or portions of them, left Washington in April last, and were supplemented in San Francisco by what is known at the Coast Survey as the Pacific Coast Contingent. Mr. McGrath is in charge. It was intended that this work, which has already been several years under way, should be completed and the reports prepared by next December, and the disputed questions submitted to the convention of the two countries (Canada and the United States) soon thereafter. But on account of the amount of labor involved there has been a postponement of one year.

Positions in connection with the expedition are eagerly sought after. There is a great deal of very hard work, but the opportunity to see Alaska is a good one. A few college students interested in this kind of work are taken along every year.

H.